



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO

San Diego Public Library

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Rare Illuminated Manuscripts and Medieval Book of Hours on Display at the San Diego Public Library

SAN DIEGO – A new exhibit, *Leaves of Gold: an Exhibit of Illuminated Manuscripts* will be on display from August 10 through December 10, 2009 at the Central Library. This free exhibit is located in the Wangenheim Room at 820 E St. in downtown San Diego and is open to the public from Monday through Saturday, 1:30 to 4:30 p.m.

Hidden in this collection of the Wangenheim Room, which holds collections of rare books and other valuable items, is an unexpected treasure—a rich trove of beautiful medieval and Renaissance miniature paintings and flashes of gold on vellum leaves that have rarely been on public display.

Illuminated manuscripts flourished from the 6th to the 16th century and are hand written texts that are supplemented by the addition of decoration, such as elaborate initials, borders (marginalia) and miniature illustrations. In the strictest definition of the term, an illuminated manuscript only refers to manuscripts decorated with gold or silver, but in both common usage and modern scholarship, the term is now used to refer to any highly decorated or illustrated manuscript. The majority of these manuscripts are of a religious nature. Historically, illuminated manuscripts were produced by monks in monasteries. Beginning in the 13th century, an increasing number were created by professional artisans working in commercial centers across Europe. The birth of the printed word in the late 15 century, that could produce works faster and in a more affordable way, meant the demise of the illuminated manuscripts that were labor intensive, costly and produced in a less timely manner.

Highlights of this rare exhibit include:

- A beautiful 15th century Book of Hours from France
- A 13th century Latin bible
- A Spanish missal from 1615
- An exquisite and highly illuminated 20th century manuscript of the Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam illustrated by Edward Taylor Jewett
- An interactive manuscript display, individual illuminated leaves, and beautiful facsimiles and reproductions of important illuminated works.

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For more information about the exhibit, please call Heidi Wigler at 619-236-5807 or visit our website at <http://www.sandiego.gov/public-library/locations/wangenheim.shtml> .

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